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THE EDWARD PARKER DEACON HOUSE.

ITS ONE-TIME OWNER, NOW INSANE, FATALLY SHOT M. ABEILL
SOME YEARS AGO IN CANNES, FRANCE.

By Mary Caroline Crawford.

The story of the famous Edward Parker Deacon house takes an additional interest through the fact that Mr. Deacon, who is mentally irresponsible and confined in the McLean Hospital at Waverley, Mass., came recently into public notice through the appointment in a Newport, R. I., court, of a guardian for his estate. Romance and tragedy are strangely interwoven in the life of Mr. Deacon.

THE great interest which has attended the erection in Boston of Mrs. "Jack" Gardner's Italian Palace recalls a similar excitement over the building fifty years ago of what was known as the Chateau Deacon, a magnificent place on Washington Street between Concord and Worcester Streets, where lived for many years the family whose present head languishes in the McLean Asylum for the Insane at Waverley.

The walls of the house are still standing, but fire has destroyed its interior, a business block has been built in its front yard and for some two years now the refitted Deacon place has been utilized as a rendezvous for working people pursuing an evening's amusement.

The present owner of the estate is, I understand, Mr. A. D. Puffer, and to his enterprise the South End is indebted for the Deacon Halls. In the various rooms some seven hundred people frequently pass a pleasant evening dancing, holding meetings or playing cards. Only one of these rooms, that called Corinthian Hall, retains, however, even the slightest resemblance to the original magnificence of the Chateau Deacon. So has a fine place passed away.

Yet the estate has not for many years been so respectable outwardly and inwardly as it is today! Even the sign "To Let," that for a long period before the fire was nailed to the fence of the original court yard had a dim and dingy look, and people who used to take to the middle of

the street for the purpose of catching a glimpse of what was reputed to be the remains of the finest house in Boston looked indeed upon a dismal scene.

The once carefully tended lawn was covered with debris, while in the place of choice cultured saplings a miniature forest of 20 years' growth stretched its rough branches before the boarded windows. Only from the rear of the house could one gain any idea of the original lines of a structure, which, with its mansard roof and its queer projecting windows, presented a kind of architectural paradox.

It was said in those days that the house was haunted, and many a tale has been told of a white face seen at one of the upper windows. But the ghost was never found and the illusion was wont to be explained by saying that some poverty-stricken person was playing on the mind of the public and thus securing a fairly comfortable and certainly exclusive lodging at small expense.

Still, those who saw the spectre very unwillingly relinquished the doubtful honor of having seen a real ghost.

Edward Deacon's maternal grandfather was Peter Parker, who lived on the eastern corner of Beacon and Spruce Streets. Peter Parker developed the famous Beacon Street boom in real estate, and when his daughter married young Deacon of Philadelphia her father hoped, by

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building the magnificent "Chateau Deacon," to increase the value of South End land.

Architecturally the building was severely French, being patterned after the Louis Philippe style, then so popular on the European continent. From France, by special contract, came painters who spent months decorating walls and ceilings in oil landscape views, and Cupids and symbolic designs lent exquisite beauty to the various rooms.

The "Marie Antoinette Boudoir" and the "Montmorenci Salon" were notably imposing apartments, nor were the stately dining room or the "blue room" chamber lacking in a single detail of decoration.

Gobelin tapestry, alone valued at thousands of dollars, hung from the walls of the large hall. It represented "Victory" and was signed "L. Van Shoord." A cathedral chair, superbly carved in oak; a table likewise made in quaint design; a chair formed of deers' antlers and skins, and a card receiver of Rosa Antico were among the many rich objects upon which the guests' eyes rested. In the billiard hall were many costly pieces of bric-a-brac and a wealth of rich paintings, including Duchene's portraits of Queen Elizabeth and Amy Robsart, Wackmuth's "The Wounded Soldier," Guident's "Ship In a Gale," and Cohn's "Scene Among the Jura."

The spacious library, too, was the receptacle of many treasures. There was an old gothic cabinet, magnificently carved and valuable beyond price, a set of Italian armor and some majolica plate attributed to Caffagido. Also to be seen were bookcases decorated with mediaeval carving and paintings by Isahy, Pingred, Alfredde Dreux and Rubens, besides a cabinet of rare minerals.

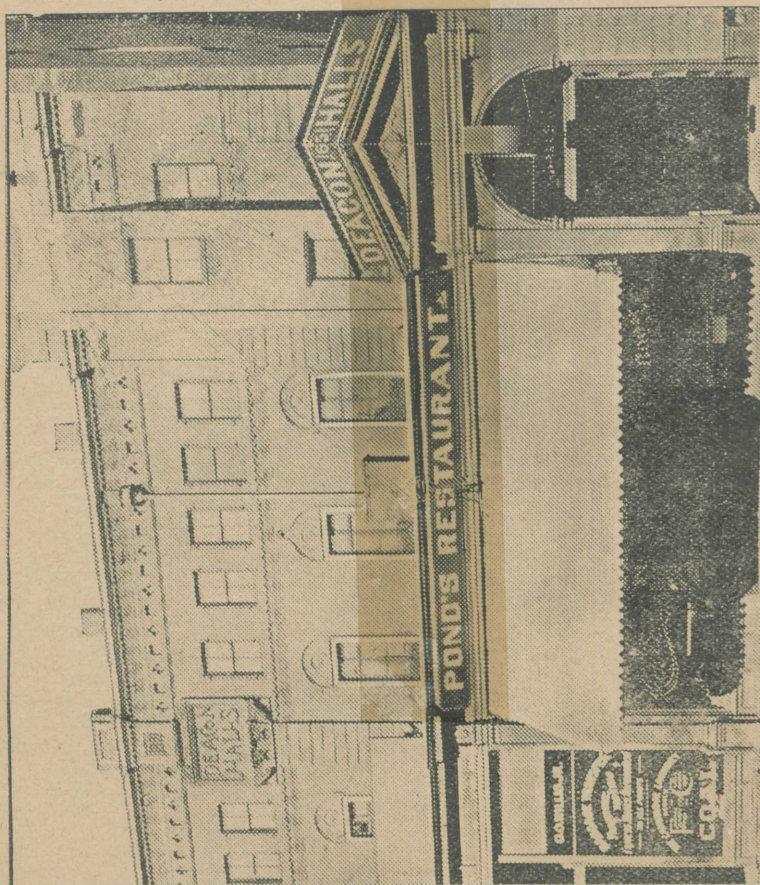
In the salon, where the coloring was white and gold, there were yellow and satin damask curtains bordered with fine tapestry. And the furniture was oak with tapestry upholstery. Cabinets of buhl and

ormolu, odd pieces of the Italian renaissance, a Japanese table inlaid with mosaics and bronze ornaments of great value were among the other features of this palatial apartment. Let into the walls were four large oil paintings by Fraignonard illustrating "The History of Love."

The "Marie Antoinette Boudoir" was, however, the gem of the house. There was the young bride's own domain, and in the fireplace could be seen among the arabesques the monogram "M. A. D." standing for Mary Anne Deacon. Here also the decorations and furnishings were white and gold, and among the young wife's special prizes was a jewel case of gilt bronze and Sevres, and a centre table of light wood inlaid with forty-five Sevres medallions, richly gilt.

In February, 1871, just a quarter century after the chateau's erection and furnishing, the entire contents of the magnificent place were disposed of under the auctioneer's hammer, the father of the present head of the house having died. The house was, however, the childhood home of the Edwin Parker Deacon who is now at Waverley, and who was ingloriously distinguished some ten years ago by reason of his fatal attack on M. Abeille, a Frenchman, whom he suspected of questionable actions with Mrs. Deacon.

Mrs. Deacon was born Myra Baldwin, and her father was Admiral Baldwin of the United States Navy. She is a woman of great personal beauty and of considerable wealth. Her father indeed settled \$100,000 on Mrs. Deacon at the time of her marriage. She was married about twenty years ago, and her husband was twelve years her senior. He had been educated at Brown University and was in the Civil War, where he made a fair cavalry record and was wounded. Miss Baldwin's choice of Deacon was vehemently opposed by her father and step-mother, but to no purpose. She per-



EDWARD PARKER DEACON HOUSE TODAY.
 and of the splendid mansion, and the house itself is now a place for pleasure seekers.

sisted in what was apparently a love match and the marriage was quietly celebrated.

From the first the union was an unhappy one, Mr. Deacon showing even so many as twenty years ago indications of insanity. His disease principally manifested itself in a kind of insane jealousy which climaxed in the famous and infamous affair at Cannes. Since the crime indeed Mr. Deacon has himself admitted that his jealousy was groundless and that his attacks on his wife's character and on the man who was the friend of both were alike the acts of a crazy man.

The fact that Deacon's own brother sympathized with Mrs. Deacon in the affair seems proof conclusive, if such were needed, that the scandalous assertions made at the time of the murder were quite without foundation.

On May 20, 1892, Deacon was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to one year's imprisonment. President Carnot pardoned him, however, on Sept. 22, 1892, and after five unhappy years of aimless wandering the broken man was committed to McLean Asylum.

As soon as the scandal of the murder had blown over Mr. Baldwin brought his sister to his ranch near Menlo Park, San Francisco. There Mrs. Deacon was last subjected to newspaper attention on Washington's Birthday of 1900, on the occasion of an administered snubbing by the ladies of the Burlingame County Club in San Mateo County.

Throughout this humiliating affair, which resulted in Mr. Baldwin's withdrawal from a club unwillingly, his sister, Mrs. Deacon, as in all the trials of her sad domestic life, bore herself with great dignity.

She is now devoting all her attention to the education of her four children, and occasionally comes quietly to visit her husband in Waverley. Mr. Deacon has recently been adjudged incurably insane, and a guardian has just been appointed for him.

So ends the personal history of the family for whom was built scarcely fifty years ago the most magnificent house in Boston. Verily of the famous "Peter Parker pride" was it true that it went before a fall.